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THE CAPABILITY BRIEF

The Capability Brief

Set the rule for stopping your work package before it starts. On 19 October Gartner reported that only 31% of CIOs have one for an AI pilot.

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This week you can set the stop rule for your own work package: what it must show, by when, and who can stop it. On 19 October 2026 Gartner reported that only 31% of the CIOs it surveyed have guidelines for stopping an AI pilot before production. Only 17% have them for abandoning a low-value AI initiative already live. You will hold one written rule, agreed before the first day of work, whichever side of the contract you work on.

- New: Gartner, 19 October 2026, only 13% of CIOs say their enterprise has realised significant or transformational value from AI “so far”.
- Escalating: in the same release, 58% of CIOs report increased pressure to deliver cost improvement from AI.
- Holds: on 14 October Accenture’s chief financial officer named three uses for its AI efficiencies, with no figure for clients’ share.

A rule for stopping is rare, and the CIOs who have one report more value

Gartner surveyed 2,002 CIOs and technology executives from May to July 2026. Organisations with guidelines for stopping a pilot before production were “2.3 times more likely to be vanguards”, and those with guidelines for abandoning a live, low-value initiative “2.6 times”. Vanguard is Gartner’s own group. The 2.3 and 2.6 are likelihoods in what CIOs reported about themselves, not effects of the rule.

Alicia Mullery, VP Analyst at Gartner, said: “Volume is not value.” She named “establishing criteria for when to walk away” among the disciplines whose absence AI now exposes.

Gartner wrote for the CIO, but the rule belongs lower down. Whoever runs the work package sees first when it is going wrong. If nothing is written, the decision to carry on is made elsewhere, later, by someone who saw less. The rule is not only for AI pilots: any work package that can show a result by a date can carry one.

Decide what the work package must show, and the date it must show it

Pick one result a colleague could check on that date without asking you: a count, a share of cases or a time saved. “Progress” does not count.

Done when: one sentence holds the result and the date, and a colleague could judge it on the day.

Name the one person who can call the stop

On the client's side this is usually the business owner whose team will use the result. On the integrator's side, the workstream lead writes the rule for what she delivers, and the client's sponsor names who can invoke it. If you work for the integrator, agree the rule with your own delivery lead first: a stop the client can call on billed work commits your firm as well as you. Either way, one named role.

Done when: a name and role sit beside the rule, and that person has agreed to hold it.

Agree the rule with your programme lead before the first day of work

A rule written after the start tends to fit whatever the work is already showing. Put it in the plan, dated, with the review dates beside it. If the work package has already started, write the rule now, date it today, and say what the work has shown so far.

Done when: the rule sits in the plan, dated, and your programme lead has read it.

One filled-in rule takes under 2 hours of your time over 8 weeks

Illustrative, with roles and no names: an AI pilot that drafts replies to supplier invoice queries, run by 3 people for 8 weeks.

By 18 December 2026, the pilot must answer 60% of the queries in the agreed test set with no reply rewritten by a person. The finance operations manager can stop it at any fortnightly review. If it stops, the team's hours return to the query backlog the next working day.

Writing that rule takes about 45 minutes. Reviewing it takes about 15 minutes a fortnight, 1 hour over the 8 weeks. That is 1 hour 45 minutes of your time against the 240 team hours the pilot will use (3 people, 10 hours a week, 8 weeks). The figures are illustrative; use your own.

Take one question to your next steering meeting

If someone invokes this rule, who decides it, and where do my team's hours go the next day?

For one procedure from a work package in depth, read the Way Pointer: <https://capability.ai/record/#series-the-way-pointer>

What to watch

In its third-quarter release and call on Thursday 29 October 2026, Cognizant will give no number or share of client AI deployments stopped or paused. If it does, this reading was wrong.

Sources

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1. Gartner, press release on its 2027 CIO and Technology Executive Agenda survey, 19 October 2026, via Business Wire; Alicia Mullery, VP Analyst. <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20261019796927/en/Gartner-Survey-Finds-Only-13-of-CIOs-Say-Their-Enterprise-Has-Realized-Significant-or-Transformational-Value-from-AI>
 2. Cognizant, investor relations page, for the third-quarter results date, 29 October 2026. <https://investors.cognizant.com/home/default.aspx>
 3. Accenture, investor day transcript, 14 October 2026; Angie Park. <https://investor.accenture.com/~media/Files/A/accenture-v4/investors/documents/accentures-fy2027-investor-an-analyst-conference-transcript.pdf>

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